

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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USMISSION NATO

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LIMDIS

E O 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV

1. SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR ABRASIMOV ON
MARCH 10 INVITED ME, THE DCM, AND OUR WIVES TO LUNCH.
ALSO PRESENT WERE MINISTER-COUNSELOR GROMKO AND MRS.
GROMYKO. WE WERE IN THE AMBASSADOR'S PRIVATE APARTMENT,
AND THE ATMOSPHERE WAS VERY PLEASANT. AT ONE POINT IN
A COMPLIMENTARY EXCHANGE I REFERRED TO OUR JOINT EFFORT
IN WORLD WAR II, THE SACRIFICES OF HIS COUNTRY AND OUR
LATER INTERVENTION, HARDLY EVER MENTIONED, TO DEFEAT
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HILTERISM.

2. MOST OF THE DISCUSSION AFTER LUNCH CENTERED ON THE U.S. DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. ABRASIMOV ASKED ME FOR MY PERSONAL VIEWS ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS OF THE PRIMARIES. AS IT TURNED OUT, HE NEEDED A BASIC EXPLANATION OF OUR SYSTEM OF PRIMARIES AND PARTY CONVENTIONS IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE VARIOUS "ELECTIONS" WERE ABOUT. HIS ANTIPATHY TO SOME OF SENATOR JACKSON'S STATEMENTS ON FOREIGN POLICY CAME THROUGH CLEARLY. OTHER SUBJECTS TOUCHED UPON ARE REPORTED BELOW.

3. 25TH PARTY CONGRESS - ABRASIMOV COMMENTED BRIEFLY ON THE CPSU CONGRESS, WHICH HE HAD ATTENDED, OBSERVING THAT IT HAD BEEN HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL. HE HOPED THE U.S. HAD NOTED SOVIET COMMITMENT TO A CONTINUED RELAXATION OF TENSIONS AND BREZHNEV'S FRIENDLY REMARKS ABOUT OUR COUNTRY. HE EMPHASIZED THE CONGRESS'S DECISION TO KEEP A STEADY COURSE IN FOREIGN POLICY.

4. DETENTE - ABRASIMOV DESCRIBED HIS GOVERNMENT AS "VERY ASTONISHED" BY PRESIDENT FORD'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN FLORIDA THAT HE WOULD NO LONGER USE THE WORD "DETENTE". IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WAS NOT INTENDED TO SIGNAL A BASIC CHANGE IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. I REPLIED THAT NO SUCH CHANGE HAD BEEN INTENDED. THE SINGLE WORD "DETENTE" WAS NO LONGER ADEQUATE TO CHARACTERIZE CORRECTLY THE EFFORTS TO RELAX TENSIONS IN WHICH THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION HAD BEEN ENGAGED OVER THE PAST YEARS. IN THE CONTEXT OF A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, A CATCHWORD SUCH AS "DETENTE" NO LONGER SERVED TO EXPLAIN OUR POLICIES. GROMYKO THEN REMARKED THAT THIS MADE SENSE FOR BOTH SIDES. ONE WORD CLEARLY WAS NOT ENOUGH, HE SAID, AND "DETENTE" WAS FURTHERMORE A FRENCH TERM. WHY SHOULD WE SPEAK FRENCH? HE BELIEVED THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT BE REFERRING TO DETENTE IN THE FUTURE EITHER.

5. SALT II - ABRASIMOV HOPED THAT THE SPIRIT OF VLADIVOSTOK WOULD PREVAIL. IN AGREEING WITH HIM, I
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EXPRESSED MY OWN STRONG BELIEF THAT NO NEGOTIATION IN THE WORLD IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT OUR TWO COUNTRIES ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH IN THE SALT TALKS. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THESE DISCUSSIONS BE BROUGHT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. ABRASIMOV ASKED ME A QUESTION GROMYKO HAD PUT TO GROVE SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER; WOULD THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF SALT II BE A HELP TO PRESIDENT FORD IN SEEKING REELECTION? I REPLIED

AFFIRMATIVELY, EMPHASIZING THAT THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTION TO ACHIEVE SALT II WAS BASED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AGREEMENT TO THE WORLD, AND NOT ON THE U.S. ELECTIONS. ABRASIMOV ASKED WHETHER, IN LIGHT OF SOME OF THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT REMARKS, SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD GOT AHEAD OF PRESIDENT FORD IN HIS PROPOSALS ON SALT. I RESPONDED THAT WHILE I DID NOT KNOW TO WHICH REMARKS THE AMBASSADOR WAS REFERRING, I HAD READ ALL OF THEIR STATEMENTS, HAD TALKED TO THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER, AND CONSIDERED THAT THE SECRETARY WAS REFLECTING THE INSTRUCTIONS OF PRESIDENT FORD IN THE SALT DISCUSSIONS.

6. ANGOLA - I SAID THAT IN THE SPIRIT OF FRANKNESS THAT HAD ALWAYS CHARACTERIZED OUR DISCUSSIONS I WANTED TO COMMENT ON ANGOLA. I HAD JUST RETURNED FROM MORE THAN THREE WEEKS IN WASHINGTON ON CONSULATIONS, AND IT WAS APPARENT TO ME THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES IN THE CONGRESS WERE DEEPLY TROUBLED BY SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA. THE U.S. POSITION IN THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO OUTSIDE INTERVENTION IN AFRICA BY FOREIGN TROOPS. AFRICANS, AFTER HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF COLONIALISM, SHOULD DETERMINE THEIR OWN DESTINY. SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN LIGHT OF DETENTE, THE SPIRIT OF HELSINKI, THE SALT I AGREEMENT AND ITS ATTENDANT AGREEMENTS, AND THE BERLIN QA IN WHICH ABRASIMOV HAD PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE. WITHIN THE UNITED STATES, THE EXTREME CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS CRITICAL OF THE POLICY OF RELAXING TENSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION HAD BEEN STRENGTHENED BY SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA. AS AN EXAMPLE, SENATOR JACKSON'S POSITION HAD BEEN STRENGTHENED.

7. SOMEWHAT ASTONISHED, ABRASIMOV SAID A MATTER
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SUCH AS ANGOLA SHOULD NOT AFFECT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE SOVIETS HAD NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, PERMITTED PROBLEMS IN CHILE TO DO SO. WHAT THE SOVIETS FOUND IN ANGOLA WAS THAT THE U.S. WAS ALREADY THERE. THE RUSSIANS HAVE NO INTERESTS IN ANGOLA, YET THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO HELP THEIR FRIENDS. I RESPONDED THAT WHILE I DID NOT WISH TO DISCUSS THE HISTORY OR THE DETAILS OF ANGOLA, I HAD STATED CORRECTLY ITS ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT IT REMAINS THE POLICY OF THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER TO SEEK TO ACHIEVE BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, A SALT II AGREEMENT, AND THE AVOIDANCE OF CONFRONTATION, AND THESE MATTERS SHOULD ALSO BE THE CONCERN OF HIS COUNTRY.COOPER

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